

Father, as we bring this bread and wine,  
and remember his death and resurrection,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that we who share these gifts  
may be fed by Christ's body and his blood.

Pour your Spirit on us  
that we may love one another,  
work for the healing of the earth,  
and share the good news of Jesus,  
as we wait for his coming in glory.  
For honour and praise belong to you, Father,  
with Jesus your Son, and the Holy Spirit:  
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Trusting in the compassion of God, let us pray with confidence  
as our Saviour has taught us ...

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

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Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:  
grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share  
his risen life; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Go now and walk in the light of God's glory.  
Love Christ  
and keep his word.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled,  
but lead others to the waters of life.

May God the Father shine on you with favour and bless you;  
May Christ Jesus mark you out as his own;  
And may the Holy Spirit lead you into all truth and peace. **Amen**

With the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work within you,  
keep you safe in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.  
**Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.**

## *St Margaret's Old Catton* *Sunday worship*



**10 May 2020**

**5th Sunday of Easter**

*this service can be found online at <https://youtu.be/Uvm79NlyJjg>  
You can also find it on 'A Church Near You' - look for St Margaret's Old Catton*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you  
**and also with you.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen  
**He is risen indeed. Alleluia**

**Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

When Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,  
"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"  
They replied: "Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah,  
and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."  
Then he asked them, "But you—who do you say I am?"  
In this time of worship we come to you and confess our faith in Christ.

**Lord, You are the Bread of Life,  
which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**

**You are the Good Shepherd,  
who lays down His own life for the sheep in His care.**

**You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life,  
the path by which we come to know God the Father.**



This is Christian Aid Week  
to make donations online  
go to  
[https://www.justgiving.com/  
fundraising/norwich-christianaid](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/norwich-christianaid)

**You are the Light of the World,  
illuminating the way for all who walk in darkness.**

**You are the Resurrection and the Life,  
the source of eternal life for all who believe.**

**You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God,  
and our Redeemer and Lord.**

*Let us pray*

Christ our passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.  
Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil  
and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

We have lived by our own strength,  
and not by the power of your resurrection.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
**Lord, hear us and help us.**

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,  
as faithless and not believing.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
**Lord, hear us and help us.**

We have lived for this world alone,  
and doubted our home in heaven.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
**Lord, hear us and help us.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Collect**

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as by your grace going before us  
you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help  
we may bring them to good effect;  
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### **Gospel Reading**

Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one;  
I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. **Alleluia.**

The Lord is here

**His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
almighty and eternal Father,  
and in these days of Easter  
to celebrate with joyful hearts  
the memory of your wonderful works.  
For by the mystery of his passion  
Jesus Christ, your risen Son,  
has conquered the powers of death and hell  
and restored in men and women the image of your glory.  
He has placed them once more in paradise  
and opened to them the gate of life eternal.  
And so, in the joy of this Passover,  
earth and heaven resound with gladness,  
while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation  
sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Father, on the night before he died,  
Jesus shared a meal with his friends.  
He took the bread, and thanked you.  
He broke it, and gave it to them, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this to remember me.

After the meal, Jesus took the cup of wine.  
He thanked you, and gave it to them, saying:  
Drink this, all of you.  
This is my blood,  
the new promise of God's unfailing love.  
Do this to remember me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.**

Risen Lord Jesus

Lord God, we give you thanks for all your gifts to us—  
for food, health, for each breath we take,  
for the gifts of your word, your power and your love.

We pray for the church dispersed, and yet united in prayer, united in faith to follow your way. We pray especially this week for the work of Christian Aid, and pray that we may be generous in our support of the poor and vulnerable, for refugees, for the poor most at risk of infection Help us to walk faithfully in the Way of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be our guardian and guide, to live humbly, generously, and with a care for all God's needy children.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

God the source of all wisdom, there is so much we need to learn, to understand other people, the world around us, our place within it, and to seek meaning and purpose for our lives. Give us wisdom to understand your Truth, and strength to witness to it in this troubled world.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

God the giver of life,  
you promise us everlasting life if we follow you along life's path,  
through bad times of sickness and sorrow,  
and good times of confidence and hope,  
along the narrow way of dedication to you  
and the stony road of self-giving love.  
In Christ you show us the Life,  
and we pray for all your people  
that we may have the fulness of life you alone can give.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We offer these prayers to you Lord God  
always mindful of the great company who compass you about,  
the ransomed and the redeemed of all the ages,  
the citizens of the new Jerusalem.  
As once they inspired us by their living,  
may they continue so to do till the day of our own homecoming to you  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Merciful Father

**Accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **Sermon**

St John gives us a very different account from the other disciples, of the last evening in Jerusalem before the crucifixion, the night of the Last Supper.

It's the evening when he washes the disciples feet. It's the evening when he speaks to them at length, and faces them with important questions.

'Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe in me, ... I am going to prepare a place for you ... and will take you to myself.'

Well, the hearts of *many* are troubled at the moment. Troubled by lockdown, lonely, and in some cases grieving. Troubled by a possible easing of lockdown, with the imagined greater risk of an increase in infection. Troubles of fighting for life and breath, troubles of keeping businesses alive and employees safe, troubles of looking after children. And some of us are better at living with troubles than others; for some, the worries just churn over and over in the mind.

Let not your hearts be troubled. For many, the troubles of this present time are of looking after other people - NHS staff looking after those with serious respiratory problems, care workers looking after the very frail, elderly spouses looking after one another maybe with dementia. But Jesus tells us not to be troubled, because God cares for you. It's perhaps one of the great opportunities of lockdown that we have time to sit and remember that despite all the turmoil of the world, God has a care for us.

Thomas is puzzled by his words though, and says that since he doesn't know where Jesus is going, he can't possibly know the way. Imagination isn't Thomas's strong point, you feel. He is using the idea of Way as a *route*, and wants a map or a 'satnav'. But it may be Jesus is talking less of a route than a *way-of-doing-things*, a *way of being*; Way as being the manner in which you conduct yourself. Thomas is troubled that he can't get a sense of direction, but I don't think Jesus is telling him he has to get out a compass and follow a bearing, or read a complicated series of road signs. Thomas overthinks the problem; what he has to do is follow.

And then there is another statement that I think is often misunderstood. 'No one comes to the Father except through me'. Sometimes people take it to be a rather exclusive statement about who will have access to God - as if God is only interested in paid-up card-carrying members of the Church of England - or whatever church you may be part of. It's a characteristic of some Christians to want to draw lines around those who are saved and who are not. I think they're mistaken. I don't think it is in the nature of God to be marking some for eternal bliss and some for the chop. I think this outlook has got it the wrong way round.

Surely the nature of Jesus as we see him in the gospels is that he is far more sympathetic to the sinners around him than to the religious elite or the self-satisfied. In his brief years of ministry we see Jesus going out of his way to draw the unlikely and unlovely to himself, the tax-gatherers and sex workers in preference, it seems, than to the Pharisees and Sadducees.

So when he says 'No one comes to the Father except through me', I believe he is saying that he is the way to the Father for all those who may not be the obvious candidates. And the 'obvious candidates' run the very serious risk that they are self-satisfied, see themselves as self-righteous, and have little need for the grace of God. 'Only if you place your trust in me *and not in your own godliness* will you come to the Father.'

Now if Thomas was short of imagination, maybe Philip was as well. 'Show us the Father' he asks. And it's a kind of easily understood desire. Give us the answer, save us from all this bother. There's a story of a little girl who could have saved us all the trouble.

"What are you drawing?" a teacher leans over and asks a little girl who was drawing a picture in school one day.

"God," the little girl responds.

The teacher laughed and said, "No one knows what God looks like,"

"They will when I finish this drawing," said the little girl.

"Show us who God is," Phillip says. "Show us the grandeur and majesty of divine glory. Show us God Almighty in splendour and magnificence. Show us ultimate cosmic power. Show us God's brilliant light in a dark and sinful world."

"Show us what the world and existence is all about. Show us that our lives are connected somehow to Eternal Life. Show us that God really cares about us. Show us that God is somehow active in the world and in our lives." These are some of the ways people put that question today.

"Are you really asking me that?" Jesus asks, not really believing Phillip still wasn't getting it.

"Have you been with me all this time and you STILL haven't figured this out? If you want to know who God is, just look at me. Look at what I do, listen to what I say. God is in me and I am in God."

God is in Jesus and Jesus is in God. Christians believe that in the life, death, and resurrection, we have seen God. That's the grand claim of today's gospel. When we see Jesus, how he lived in the world, when we hear Jesus, the words he spoke to his first followers, the words he speaks to us today, we know, by the power of the Holy Spirit opening our minds and tugging at our hearts, that we have seen, heard, and felt God. Emmanuel. God with us.

We have a God who loved us too much to remain distant and unapproachable. And yet we expect him to look completely different, and so miss him righting front of us. The following day, Jesus was asked by Pilate, 'What is truth?' as if the answer could have been spoken.

Our task is to be witnesses to what we know. We believe and know that Jesus is the Way, the truth and the life. If you want to find your way to God, he is the way. And the way is the way of the cross, a life full of risk and uncertainty, a way of service, kneeling and washing feet with a towel wrapped around you, the work of the household slave.

'Have I been with you *all this time*, and still you do not know me?' Jesus says to Philip.

It's a chastening rebuke.

God is among us, all over the place, with those in Covid wards in hospital, with those in Care homes where their families can't visit them, caring for children off-school, and emptying the bins. He's doing the work of a servant for us, under the radar, behind the scenes.

Do not let your hearts be troubled; believe me because of the works themselves.

Christ is risen and God is among us, Alleluia, **Amen**.